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ABSTRACT

A 1974 conference of the Institute of International Education held in Hong Kong prompted this essay on the dilemmas of university freedom and political control. The relationship of higher education and national development in Asia is discussed with attention focused on the issue of university autonomy and on the problem of equality of access to higher education in multiracial and multicultural societies. (JMF)

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Issues in
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Report No. 1

Education is Development, and Vice Versa

Reflections on a Transpacific Dialogue

by Harlan Cleveland

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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Issues in International Education

The publication of this series of papers reflects the Institute's continuing concern with the critical issues in international education. In recent years this concern has been expressed particularly through the Institute's sponsorship of the International Councils on Higher Education, which bring together chief executives of universities in the U.S. and other regions of the world for examination of topics of shared interest. Essays prepared as subjects for discussion at these conferences will form a portion of the series, which will draw upon other resources as well.

The past two decades have been a period of enormous growth in education throughout the world. As the role of education has increased in dimension, the choices involved in educational decision-making have increased in complexity and in social impact. It is hoped that this series will contribute to the ongoing debate on the issues of international education through examination of alternative viewpoints and through the publication of new information. As international education in our era has broadened its scope beyond traditional activity to include developmental assistance and other concerns, the range of topics covered in the series will reflect this breadth of interests in the field.

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Education is Development, and Vice Versa

Reflections on a Transpacific Dialogue

by Harlan Cleveland

Harlan Cleveland became Director of the Program in International Affairs of the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies in September 1974, upon completion of a five-year term as President of the University of Hawaii. Mr. Cleveland has also served as U.S. ambassador to NATO; Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs; Dean of the Maxwell Graduate School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University; publisher, The Reporter; and as a foreign-aid executive.

This essay consists of reflections on the discussions of the 1974 Hong Kong conference of the Council on Higher Education in Asia. The meeting was the fifth in an annual series of Asian-U.S. educators conferences supported by IIE through a grant of the Henry Luce Foundation.

I. Political Push and Demand Pull

The evolution of nations since 1945 gives evidence of a correlation between higher education and development that is direct, positive, and almost universal. I am not wise enough to know which is cause and which effect. Nor am I persuaded that rapid economic growth is the central purpose of education. I am also aware that the science of society is full of untested and misleading correlations. Having said all this, it is still impossible to ignore or discount the fact: economic growth generally cohabits with wider access to, and larger numbers of graduates from, institutions of higher learning.

In the American experience, both the numbers of college students and the gross product per capita set world records. Soviet growth, too, accompanied an enormous educational development. Nations with few natural resources could more than compensate, it seems, by developing their human resources – the British, Italians and Japanese bore witness. Countries with ample natural endowments remained colonized, patronized and poor so long as higher education was available only to the few – Asia, Latin America, the Mideast and Africa have until recently been full of cases in point. South Korea, Taiwan and Israel, the three outstanding non-communist cases of rapid development and effective use of outside aid in the generation just past, are all societies where ambition for advanced education is near the top of the hierarchy of social values. Where the pace of development seems to have outrun the local availability of higher education, as in the city-states of Hong Kong and Singapore, that may be simply because so many people with advanced training were attracted to those boomtowns from elsewhere.

The one part of the world where the correlation breaks down is in South Asia: there universities crammed with students coexist with low growth rates, low per capita GNP, and high rates of unemployment among educated people. But the subcontinent is also the only Asian region where indigenous universities have not been built on a base of widespread primary and secondary education. And it is also in India and its neighbors that one finds the most tenuous connection between what is studied in, and the problems that await solution outside, the academy.

The perception that education leads to power and prosperity came naturally to new national leaders whose own influence and affluence started with their getting more schooling than most of their compatriots. In one ex-colony after another, the politically potent and the socially desirable were what an African calypso called "been-to's" – those who had been to Europe or America, or in a few cases to Russia, for graduate study.[1] The desperate shortage of agricultural and industrial specialists, and of people able to manage urban, military and governmental complexities, drove newly independent nations into massive support for higher education. South Korea had 19 universities with 8,000 students in 1945; less than three decades later, it has approximately 70 institutions of higher learning serving about 200,000 students. (Altogether 26 percent of the population is in school or college, up from 5 percent in 1945.) The contagion transcends ideological borders. In its first fifteen years the People's Republic of China pushed its university population up from roughly 100,000 in 1948-49 to 820,000 in 1962-63. (The Cultural Revolution, according to one estimate, knocked that back to 40,000 in 1972-73.)[2]

1. The lyric is the epitome of early development philosophy: a girl, singing of her ideal in a man, says she wants "a Jaguar, a fridge full, and a been-to."

2. Choh-Ming Li, "Emerging Patterns of Higher Education in Asia and their Effect on International Education," Institute of International Education Annual Report 1973.

With local variations the story is similar from Seoul to Teheran: the expansion of higher education is a leading index, and apparently the leading edge, of development. Prior to 1945, only three independent Asian nations and five colonies[3] had universities at all. Today, only Laos and Afghanistan do not. There are now more university students in Asia than on any other continent – as there naturally should be.[4]

The political push for local public higher education produces strikingly similar patterns of institutional growth in the countries, whether "developed" or "developing," of the Pacific rim. The pattern starts with one or a number of transplanted institutions, designed for an intellectual elite and modeled after the older and more prestigious French, British, German or American universities, depending upon which alumni are making public policy. However, elite criteria for admission to the magic of advanced learning turn out to be no match for a politics of egalitarian promises. Nor does the inherited classical curriculum seem to produce the teachers, nurses, farm scientists, mechanics, accountants, economists, planners, lawyers, doctors and public executives needed for national development. Prodded by the public authorities, the universities expand in numbers and "relevance"; technical schools and research institutes grow up to take up any remaining slack. By this time the universities have become so huge that there is much talk of decentralization; provincial universities are added, "systems" of higher education emerge, and the urban institutions are relocated to new and more spacious campuses outside of town. (The educational motive for relocation is sometimes reinforced by the desire of authoritarian leaders to minimize the size and propinquity of student demonstrations against government policy.)

The dilemmas of public higher education, like its patterns of growth, are widely shared around the Pacific. In five years of transpacific shuttling, I have listened as other university administrators asked themselves the same two questions I was asking myself in Hawaii:

1. What is "equality of opportunity"? In societies divided by barriers of race, language and culture, how can we be "fair"?

2. How can we get from government the resources to buy academic talent and build instructional and research buildings, yet keep the political authorities at arm's length when it comes to educational policies?

II. A Sliding Scale of Equalities

The political rhetoric of equality is like a powerful shotgun: its wide-angle blast is effective, but the range is short and the target fuzzy. For the educator the message is clear – many more students must be admitted to post-secondary learning. But equality for whom, for how long, related to what outcomes? In practice, there develops in every higher education system what one Asian university head calls "a sliding scale of equalities."

Virtually every national society has its roots in racial, linguistic or cultural separateness, and most of its political power in the hands of one ethnic group. This was obviously true of colonized societies; because self-determination was often a racial battle-cry, it is almost equally true of the newer nations. In some Pacific and East Asian areas – Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Fiji and Hawaii – the integration of large minorities in a wider polity is a dominant social and political purpose; colleges and universities, as the primary engines of upward mobility, are geared by public policy to that purpose. The first and easiest policy is to open wider the gates to higher education, by "reverse discrimination" if necessary.

3. Japan, China, and Thailand among the independent countries; India, the Philippines, Vietnam, Hong Kong, and Korea among the colonies.

4. Choh-Ming Li, op. cit.

Colonial policy in what is now Malaysia favored the Chinese minority, about one-third of the population, and assumed that the vast bulk of indigenous Malays would remain in rural villages, where they would not need to learn English (only 8% did) or cope with urban complexity. Before Malaysia's reform of higher education, its university-level engineering program was graduating 60 engineers a year, but typically only one or two were Malays. Starting in May of 1969, a Malaysian national government set out to use its school system and its national university to give the Malays an equal chance: Malays were favored in admissions; English language teaching was pushed hard; developmental education, to bring rural Malays up to college level, was spread wide; some university courses were taught for the first time in Malay, and everybody (including the Chinese and the European-educated elite) was encouraged to learn the national language.

In neighboring Thailand where the national language had been long established, access has been opened without discrimination to all who qualify – but the Chinese minority must compete successfully in the Thai language. This policy of "equal and competitive assimilation" works well for those who *are* best qualified. But the culturally disadvantaged groups – hill tribes in the north, Moslems in the south – are unable to compete with the already educated Thais and Chinese. Searching for a discriminating form of non-discrimination, Thailand has established regional universities with different standards. This is "meritocracy by geography": the best students, still mostly Thais and Chinese, make their way to Bangkok for post-secondary education, and the others go to school closer to home.

The Malaysian and Thai cases, and the analogies they suggest elsewhere in the region, illustrate the familiar dilemma of every modern system of higher education: students are admitted by egalitarian principles, but must be trained to differential levels of meritocratic standards.[5] It is a political "must" to admit many more students – indeed many more *kinds* of students – than would have "qualified" for entry into the elite institutions of an earlier day, yet colleges and universities are reluctant to "lower standards."

The standards in question are seen by the political authorities as inhibiting the academy from performing its role as a service station for national development. But the academics are part of an international club in which standing is judged not by local service but by comparative professional reputation.

Just when higher education in the "advanced" countries is abandoning the idea of a core curriculum by proliferating courses in great cafeterias of the intellect, the developing countries are led by their own national needs to guide and focus the university's offerings. But governments, of course, are not very good at predicting national manpower needs – what kinds of people, with what kinds of training, their future plans will employ.

During the early years after 1945 the prestige of law and the social sciences produced "too many experts on software and too few experts on hardware," says an Asian academic administrator. Indonesia at independence (1947) could count only 7 graduate economists – to go with its 70 graduate engineers and 700 doctors of medicine – for a nation of 80,000,000. Twenty-seven years later, some Indonesian educators think they are training too many economists, but are not sure how to stanch the flow when so many students want the status that goes with an economics degree. Later in the development process, the prestige of technology takes over, and specialists in every technical field flood

5. This concept is well explained in James A. Perkins', "Is the University an Agent for Social Reform?" Paper delivered to a symposium held by the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, as part of its centennial celebrations in May 1973. Occasional Paper No. 8, International Council for Educational Development, New York City.

the manpower market. Developing nations that are well supplied with technicians now find their most desperate shortage is again on the "software" side, but this time for people educated in breadth, the public executives who can bring the experts together in organizations to get complicated things done.

The tension ("torque") between egalitarian entry and meritocratic exit seems to be handled, in country variations on a common theme, by the deliberate promotion of different classes of institutions—the central-city public universities and the best of the private universities getting the best students and training them for leadership, while provincial universities, technical colleges and (in the U.S.) community colleges make good on the promise of equal educational opportunity. The distinctions of quality are politically acceptable as long as the brightest students can move with some ease from the lesser to the greater institutions. As the college-going rate of black Americans approaches that of the whites, black political leaders more and more insist on arrangements ("positive discrimination," "affirmative action") to ensure that a sizable number of blacks are admitted to the more prestigious four-year campuses —such as Berkeley and UCLA in California, CCNY in New York City— and not socially classified by a policy of open admissions to two-year institutions and state colleges and "quality" fences around the best campuses.

A wide enough variety in styles, levels, and qualities of post-secondary education, a hierarchy of educational opportunities to fit each individual's capacity, a "sliding scale of equalities"— such a policy seems to appeal to governments, voters and students as both protecting "fairness" and "maintaining standards." But to make it work, there has to be (a) a heavy investment in developmental education—preparing educationally disadvantaged students in the "three C's" of college prerequisites, Communication, Computation and Confidence; (b) a willingness to move students up the hierarchy of opportunity according to their capacity and potential, rather than according to their family background, income, race or region; and (c) an insistence on equipping every student with the indispensable elements of success in the market place for development manpower—including not only the national language but also English as the main means of international communication in the late 1970's and beyond.

III. The Marriage with Caesar

In every country around the Pacific rim the political authorities, preoccupied with equality and development, are thus pushing universities to take in more students, equip them with development-relevant skills, and fit them into a development-oriented manpower market. The rapidly growing increment in the costs of post-secondary education is largely borne by government, national or provincial or both together. How can higher education, mostly funded by political decisions, limit political control of the academy?

By American standards the Asian patterns of university governance seem dangerously intimate. Most of the expansion in higher learning in Asia is a direct expression of public policy; private endowments and independent research funds are small, and few institutions collect an economic fee from their students. (Where they do, as in the money-making proprietary universities in the Philippines, the result is wretched diploma-mill standards; the Marcos government is actively trying to drive them out of business.)

In these circumstances it is not surprising that university councils or governing boards are dominated by people from national Education and Finance Ministries; several top academic executives are also Ministers or high-level civil servants in their national governments. University budgets are reviewed by civil servants who often express their own anti-intellectual prejudices. Faculty resistance to government domination was strong when the faculty leadership was in the hands of expatriates who regarded themselves as belonging to a republic of learning. But their departure – hastened in some cases by their own indifference to the imperatives of development – leaves local appointees who are more willing to work within the political system – to be loyal, as British civil servants used to say, to one government at a time.

In some countries student activism remains a prime factor in government-university relations. Student movements have helped overthrow governments in South Korea and Thailand, embarrass governments in Indonesia, South Vietnam and Japan, and present a latent threat even in countries where police control is currently more than a match for student protest.

Authoritarian regimes must reckon with many different constituencies, including business, labor, universities, the military, and the government bureaucracy itself. Control is not difficult as long as the constituency to be controlled is itself organized in ways the regime can understand. But student power is often a baffling scene of shifting leadership, unplanned demonstrations, and unpredictable targets. (Churches, too, are slippery objects of political control, as the Park government in Korea has found.)

In the public institutions, the government typically appoints the governing board, doles out the subsidy from quarter to quarter, establishes the standards for entry, and provides many of the jobs at the exit end of the educational systems. Even the private universities, which are very important in Japan and Korea, are crucially dependent on government subsidies and permissions and are discriminated against as a matter of public policy. In Japan, public university tuition fees are typically one-fifth of those in private institutions; at national universities the faculty-student ratio is about 1 to 8, compared with 1 to 30 in the private universities; the University of Tokyo alone drew almost as much from the national treasury ($140 million) as the total in public support for 740 private institutions ($156 million).

In the developing countries it is fair to say, as one Asian educator does say, that "the achievement of political freedom does not mean academic freedom . . . it often means the loss of academic freedom." In South Korea, scholars and students are forbidden by law from reading any North Korean publications; a reciprocal ignorance is enforced in North Korea. The few authorized depositories for those proscribed materials are literally kept in padlocked cages.

The limiting case is probably that of the Philippines, where a good many anti-regime professors from the University of the Philippines were jailed by President Marcos when he declared martial law; when they were then selectively released, the university president was made personally responsible for their subsequent behavior. The government has reached out to control private higher education (which serves 92% of all students in the Philippines) by setting admission standards, reviewing the curricula and faculty appointments, nationalizing all administrative appointments, taxing their real property

and imports of educational equipment, and establishing legislative control of how their tuition fees will be spent (for example, 60% must be used to raise salaries). These measures are justified by the need to squeeze out the diploma mills; but they are also applied to the better institutions such as Santo Tomas, Asia's oldest university (1644) and still one of its best.

Some Asian educators who have grown up in the British system think that a University Grants Commission is essential as a buffer between Caesars and the academy. A UGC plans and budgets for universities and colleges in its area; the academics don't need to lobby for funds to do their jobs, and the politicians are estopped from intervening in academic affairs. In Hong Kong, where there is a UGC, no government officials sit on the university governing boards. The UGC, which has professors (from elsewhere) and community leaders as members, helps keep academic hobby-horses in the stable, tries to avoid duplication of programs in similar institutions, and decides on an appropriate rate of growth of enrollment. It provides, at least in theory, a sympathetic, pro-education supervision of higher learning. "Universities all have to deal with their Caesars, but should not cast themselves in the role of Brutus," says one Oxford-educated Asian educator. "We all need a Horatio to help lubricate the relationship."

A University Grants Commission has been proposed for the Philippines. UGCs coordinate Hong Kong's two universities and several technological colleges. Similar bodies lay out long-range plans for the Universities of the South Pacific (in Suva, Fiji) and of Papua and New Guinea. Elsewhere in the region, however, there is a marked preference for direct dealing. The UGC is criticized as a "colonial device"; the technique of multi-year budgeting inhibits rapid change and quick expansion, and also loses money through inflation; above all, the more self-confident academic administrators would rather deal with the decision-makers themselves. "Those Treasury people are mostly my former students," says a professor of economics turned administrator. "I would rather talk to them directly than through a group of party hacks and overseas professors."

No pat formula for what the academy should render to Caesar emerges from a dialogue among Asian and American educators. Financing the piper *does* in practice entitle the political authorities to call the tune on (a) how many of which categories of its constituents get into the universities, (b) what kinds of academic training and research are essential to development (as defined by the authorities), (c) how much money will be available for higher education, and to some extent (d) what jobs will be available for the holders of university credentials. But given self-confident leadership and an occasional show of personal courage, each university's leaders can still decide (a) what intellectual standards will underlie its credentials, (b) how broad or narrow a relevant education should be, and (c) what learning, beyond filling development needs, is needed as a basis for lifetime self-fulfillment. And these are, after all, the key academic judgments, which can best be reached by those whose vocation is learning. Overall control by the political authorities is a given; but there are important questions of degree that depend on the quality of academic planning and the political skills of the academy's administrators.

> "The marriage with Caesar *must* be consummated . . . there's no alternative, says the president of one Asian university. "Agreed," says another. "But the question is, 'How many times a week?'"

About IIE

The Institute of International Education was founded in 1919 to promote international understanding through education. It administers scholarship and fellowship programs for the U.S. and foreign governments, universities, foundations, corporations and international organizations, and provides support services to researchers and advisers on developmental assistance projects abroad. Seeking to promote effective educational interchange, IIE offers information and consultative services through a network of offices in the U.S. and overseas and carries on an extensive schedule of seminars and workshops. IIE acts as the parent agency for the International Councils on Higher Education, which bring together U.S. and foreign university heads and other educational policy-makers in a continuing series of conferences.

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